

The Messiah Must Suffer Many Things
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We're gonna read a long section of scripture today, that's why I need the big print, ok? And it comes out of a really crucial point in the gospel of Mark, and that's why I wanna read it. And I'll walk ya through it, but we're gonna read straight through, beginning at chapter 8, verse 11. And we're gonna read over...almost 24-25 verses here. We're gonna start at chapter 8, verse 11, and we're just gonna read through it. It's part of our commitment as a congregation—our desire is to be a people who can, anywhere, anytime, speak clearly and accurately with respect to Jesus. There's a lot of opinions, there's a lot of ideas, there's a lot of speculation, a lot of conjecture about Jesus—who He is, what He said, what He's really all about. And we want to be able to speak, anywhere, anytime—not with speculation, not with confusion, not with opinion—we want to be able to speak clearly and accurately with respect to Him. That begins by looking at Him in scripture so that we see Him clearly and accurately. And that's what we've been doing in the gospel of Mark.

And today we're at the 8th chapter—very critical point. It's a turning point in our Lord's ministry. Everything is going to start to change in His work. This point he's been up north in an area called Galilee, and He has been performing wondrous miracles. Crowds have joined in. There's a...there's almost an uprising building, a desire to make Him king and overthrow the Romans. At this same time the religious authorities are beginning to say, "We don't think He's the messiah," and there's tension building. And we'll pick it up here at chapter 8, verse 11. As He comes into a region in Galilee we're told in verse 11 that

The Pharisees came out and they began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him.

...something unmistakably from God...

Sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, "Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." And leaving them, He went away to the other side by boat.

We're told that as they got into the boat they, His disciples, had forgotten to take bread...

...and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them. And He was giving orders them orders at that time, and He was saying to them, "Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.

...Be aware of the permeating unbelief that is exhibited in them. And, verse 36 [*should be verse 16*] they, the disciples, began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread with them in the boat.

And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember..."

...and now He'll mention two of His grandest, most amazing miracles; He says...

...when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?"

And they said to Him, "Twelve."

And He says, "When I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?"

And they said to Him, "Seven."

And He was saying to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus, and they implored Him to touch him. And taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes, and laying His hands on him, He said, "Do you see anything?"

And he looked up and said, "I see men, I see them like trees walking around."

And then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly. And He, Jesus, sent him to his home, saying, "Don't even enter the village."

Jesus went out from there, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi...

...a little further to the north...

...and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, "Who do people say that I am?"

And they told Him, saying, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets."

And He continued by questioning them, "But who do you say that I am?"

And Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ, the Messiah."

And He warned them to tell no one about Him. And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And He was stating the matter plainly.

It is really difficult to get our minds around—to get our understanding to grip—all the reality of Jesus; to be able to...our souls to be able to absorb the wonder and mystery of all there is to Him. The scriptures, for example, say that Jesus...not only were all things brought to be by Him and for Him; the scriptures also tell us all things right now hold together *in* Him. In other words, if you were to take Jesus out of the reality, the picture of reality, everything would just fly apart! That's an amazing person, an amazing being; my mind can't get around that—somebody that could feed four thousand people from just a few loaves of bread, and as He hands it out it just keeps multiplying and multiplying and multiplying.

It's very hard to get a grasp of the full reality of Jesus; and no place is it harder to get a grasp of the full reality of Jesus than when it comes to the cross—the reality that He went to the cross. He stated it plainly. In fact, the first time He taught it is in the text we just read.

When we come down to verse 31 and it says He began to teach them, His disciples, that the Son of Man—that was a title for the Messiah that came out of the Old Testament prophecies—it says that *He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things*. And we wanna underscore the word *must* here. It's very emphatic—it's necessary. This is the only way it can be. Must suffer—and not just suffer a little bit, suffer one thing or another—it says He must suffer many things. And then He goes on and says not only that, but *He must be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes*. These are the three categories that made up the Jewish Sanhedrin, the religious court of Israel. And we would expect that the Messiah must be confirmed by the highest religious court in the land. And instead, we're told He must be rejected by the highest religious court in the land.

And not only must He suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes—the religious court, the highest religious court in the land; He must be killed. *The Messiah must be killed*—and after three days, rise again.

It isn't simply that the Messiah must rule; it isn't simply that the Messiah must ascend to the throne; it isn't simply that the Messiah must have His kingdom forever and ever. It's the Messiah must suffer many things; He must be rejected; and He must be killed.

How do we grip that? How do we understand that? The disciples couldn't get a grip on it. I mean, they could get a grip; and most of us can get a grip on the idea and the understanding that yeah, Jesus is the Messiah. We can get that. They did in this text, when Jesus said to them, just prior to His comment about His crucifixion, He said to His disciples, He says, "Who do you say that I am?"

And the Apostle Peter comes back and he says, “You’re the Christ. You’re the Messiah. We know that. You’re God’s appointed ruler and savior for all mankind, the one who will set all things right, the one who will establish God’s kingdom and rule in righteousness and peace and glory forever and ever and ever.” They could get that.

And most of us within this room get that. It’s not easy, ‘cause He’s not one that gives signs to the skeptic whenever we demand them. The Pharisees say to Him, “Give us a sign from heaven. We know, we’ve heard you’ve raised the dead, we know you fed the thousands. But you know what? Give us a miracle that’s unmistakably got God’s mark on it.” Well, what would that be? I mean, does God need to be thundering and speaking when that happens? How do we know this is really from heaven? And they’re not givin’ Him a clue as to how to do that. They’re just sayin’, “Show us it’s really from heaven, from God.” Jesus turns and walks away, and leaves ‘em. And that’s the way He is when we demand a sign.

When He does act in our lives with mystery, and with grace, and with glory and kindness that we don’t deserve, we don’t pick up on it. The group of disciples in the boat...and they got one loaf of bread, and they’re concerned that Jesus is upset with ‘em because they didn’t bring enough food. They got the bread maker of all bread makers with ‘em! And we look at ‘em and say ‘How can they not connect the dots?’ We’re the same. Over and over and over again God touches our lives with His kindness, and His mercy, and His goodness; and we’re worried that we’re going into the next day without enough.

And then there’s the strange, strange things He did. Spit in a guy’s eyes? ‘Heal him, Jesus! Give him sight!’ Ok. He takes the man, goes all by Himself, stand over, looks at him, and then spits into his eyes! And then that seems to only work part way. He has to touch him again before he can really see clearly. The cataracts, or whatever it was that had blinded this man over a period of time were suddenly gone. I mean, we track Him, we look at Him...He’s different. You know, we can still get the idea—He’s the Messiah. He is God’s anointed ruler and leader.

The hard thing for us, as it was hard for the disciples, is to see and to understand and to grip and have our hearts get a hold of the fact that this Messiah had to die, be rejected, suffer many things. The disciples couldn’t get it. When Jesus said to them...He started teaching the matter to them very plainly—I mean He could not say it any more plainly than He did in this text. It’s the first time He taught it to ‘em, and He did it without a riddle; He did it without a proverb; He didn’t do it with any kind of mysterious meaning. He just simply got it out there plain and direct.

And the response by the disciples? Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. This is not a soft word. He took Jesus aside and he began to get after Him. Can you picture that?!? Peter has just said, ‘You’re the Messiah, You’re God’s chosen leader for all time; You’re the one who’s gonna set everything right,’ and he pulls Him aside and says, ‘Listen, You’ve gotta get Your plan straight. The Messiah can’t be killed, can’t suffer many things, and He shouldn’t be rejected.’ And he rebukes Jesus. He commands...that’s literally the idea...he commands Jesus to stop talking that way.

Jesus rebukes him back. In one of the harshest statements of all of Jesus to His disciples ever, He says to the Apostle Peter, one of His closest followers, He says, “*Get behind Me, Satan.*” Literally, the word is ‘adversary,’ and we can read it with a capital ‘S’ or a small ‘s’ here. The idea is ‘You are opposed to Me, like the evil one himself. Get behind Me.’

They couldn’t get it. They could get the idea; they were seein’ it finally; after walking with Jesus for almost three years they’re finally beginnin’ to see ‘This is the Messiah! He’s not just Elijah back from the dead. He’s not just a prophet. He’s not John the Baptist back from the dead. This is the Messiah! The king is here!’ They were finally seeing that. But they couldn’t get this—and we’re like that.

Now, we’re not often as resistant as Peter. We’re not ones that are gonna sit there and say, ‘This is foolish; this is scandalous. The Messiah never died!’ We’re not gonna treat it that way. But then again, I see very few of us that have the perspective, the attitude, the heart of someone, say, like the Apostle Paul who says, ‘Whenever I talk about...’—end of Galatians—he says, ‘You know what? Whenever I talk about what’s good in Christianity, whenever I’m gonna talk about what’s special in our faith, whenever I talk about anything that would cause me to say ‘Yes! This is why we’re so right, why we should stand for what we believe in,’ it’s the cross.’ He says, ‘You give me an opportunity to talk about my faith and I am gonna talk about the cross.’ And then he goes on to make this statement about the cross. He says, ‘By which the world was crucified to me, and I was crucified to it.’ It’s a strange phrasing, but what he means is ‘Because of the cross, the world and what matters to world no longer matters to me. And I no longer matter to it. That cross has changed my relationship to everything.’

We may not resist the way Peter did, but very few of us affirm the way Paul does. Among most of us there's sign of a respectful...what I call a respectful disconnect. We respect the cross; we respect those events that took place so long ago. There's almost a reverence to us, and there's a hushed emotion when we read the account and realize that Jesus did suffer many things. He was rejected. And He was crucified. And we read that, and we're moved by it, and we look at it. But it remains in the back, in the past. And there's kind of a disconnect between that and who we are and what we're doin' today. We don't see that as the defining thing in our relationships, the defining thing in our approach to the world and our response to the world. I don't know that we sit there and say that the first important of all first importance is the cross, and that that event and all that Jesus went through at that time is determining how I get up and face this day; and that I am approaching this day with an absolute confidence in the reality of Jesus because of that; and I am approaching this day with an absolute confidence in the future because of that; and I'm approaching this day with a heart that is engaged to care because of that.

I don't know that we grasp it as the one thing that should be defining your life right now, at this moment. It should be determining how you treat your spouse, how you raise your kids, how you approach the work you do, how you manage your resources, how you speak in conversation. I don't know if we fully get it.

There's a reason, and it's a really important statement in Jesus' response to Peter. He says it this way. Peter's rebuked Him, and He's come back and says, 'Peter, no. I must die. The Messiah must do this.' He says to Peter, 'You're not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's. You're not thinking about what matters to God when you look at the Messiah. When you look at the Messiah, Peter, you're looking at what matters to man. And because of that...because of that you reject the idea of the cross.'

Whenever we look at the Messiah with our minds set upon what matters to man, we will always be disappointed. We will always want to tweak, correct, and adjust what He said, what He did, and what He will do. It is only when we look at the Messiah, thinking about what matters to God, that we'll ever see the why and the wonder of the reality—He *had* to suffer many things, He *had* to be rejected, and He *had* to be killed. The Messiah *had* to die. You will only appreciate that, you'll only wrap your heart around it, when you look at the Messiah thinking about what matters to God.

It's amazing when you do, because what you discover is what matters to God is sinners like you and me. There's a lot of other things that matter to Him that we could mention; and it's in the plural here—the interests, the matters, the things of God. But one of the things you'll discover is He cares about sinners like you and me—people who can't get our act together, people who just can't quite hit the standard of excellence that really we ought to be if we're God's people. You begin to discover that the Messiah must die, because He was sent by the Father, our God, to seek and to save sinners. That was God's matter of concern. It was not man's matter of concern.

God's matter of concern is that sinners like you and I would be found by Him, they would be forgiven, and they would be set free. And I wanna underscore that—they would be set free; but they would be set free not from Roman oppression, not from debilitating conditions; they would not be set free from traumatic experiences. They would be set free from their own pride, from their own greed, from their own envy, from their own bitterness, from their own lust, from their own foolishness. And that's why, when He left, the Roman government was still in oppressive control of Palestine. There were still people in blindness and death and disease. And there were still people traumatized by their life experiences. But He had come, and He had suffered many things, and He had been rejected, and He had died, so that sinners could be found and saved.

That's the why; that's the wonder; and that's the necessity of the cross. Is there any hope we'll ever get it, that deeply and that profoundly, that it shapes the very words you use in conversation? Is there any hope that we'll finally get it so deeply that it will determine the attitude you get up with in the morning?

I think so. I think there's hope. I find it in a strange place. Remember that odd miracle? Spitting in the eye? And two steps? I mean, it's strange. I mean, Jesus throughout His ministry He'd walk by, people'd touch the hem of His robe and "Boom!" they'd be healed! Or He'd look at a dead girl. He looked at a dead girl...He looked at her and said, 'Get up! Wake up!' And she immediately...one word! That's all He said was one word, and in Aramaic He said 'Wake up', and she was awake, alive! And here we have Him with this man, spitting in the eye and touching.

It's Jesus teaching. The apostles recognized it later. The reason He took that blind man away from the crowd and got off by Himself with His disciples to do this was simply...He wanted to give them an object lesson—that He could bring people to sight in any number of steps. And what came out of His mouth, and what touched their lives, would give 'em sight. And I tell you what—if His spit and the touch of His hand could give somebody's eye's sight, His word and His Spirit can give our souls sight. And if it takes one, two, three, five, six touches, He'll do it.

In this case, He'd spent three years with His disciples, teaching and talking to 'em, and they finally got it—they were finally seeing "This is the Messiah!" But they weren't seeing it all yet. And so the second half of His ministry will be the second touch, when they come to see that the Messiah really does have to die, suffer many things, be rejected, or we—as sinners—have no hope.

That little object lesson healing became the paradigm, the pattern, of His ministry with those disciples, and eventually they did see. And I'm convinced eventually we will see—fully, deeply, and profoundly. But we gotta keep looking, just like that blind man.

You say, 'Well, what do I do next then, Larry?'

We're at a critical point goin' through Mark, and I'm gonna give you the most important study tool I can give you from here on out. As we go on through the gospel of Mark, and maybe you're doing other Bible reading right now in your life and your devotional quiet times—you know, that's one of the distinctive elements, one of the essentials of the Christian experience—you gotta spend time in the Bible just reading it. But as you read it I wanna give you a question to keep asking. And I'm convinced that the most important study tools that we bring are questions. But here's the question I want you to use over and over and over again. I want, every time we go into the gospel of Mark in the months ahead, every other passage of scripture you go into, every ladies' bible study, every little kids' Sunday school class, I want this question to be reverberating in our hearts and our minds. I want us to be looking into scripture, and I want us to be asking ourselves—

What really matters to God? What really matters to God?

You say, 'Larry, that's not really that big a thing to ask that.'

It's a *huge* thing to ask. Because most of us, when we approach the scriptures, open that book and we ask, 'What in here might matter to me?' We turn those pages and we say, 'What in this story might matter to me? What in this account, in this verse, might matter to me, help me sort out my priorities, help me get my projects done, solve my problem, keep my family together?' We keep opening that book and we keep saying, 'What in here might matter to me?' *And that is the wrong question to ask!*

The question to ask, over and over and over again as you open this book, is 'What possibly in my life and in the world around me might matter to God?'

And I'm convinced...only when you ask that question, and you ask it diligently and determinedly, over and over and over and over again, not looking for opinions, not looking for speculation—looking at the word of God and saying, "God, what matters to You?" It is only then that you will see the wonder, and the why, and the glory, and the grace of the Messiah. The Messiah suffered many things, was rejected, and He died. *Then* He rose again. What matters to God?

Let's stand.

Our Father in heaven,

As we spend time in Your scriptures we renew the prayer we began the study of Mark with. We ask that You will give us eyes to see, hearts to hold, minds to grip, the reality and the wonder of Your Son, Jesus. Father, we've been in this study long enough to know and to recognize that He really is somebody special, that He is the Messiah, He is the Christ. Now Father, touch us again with Your word and Your Spirit so we grasp the why and the wonder of His cross.

In Jesus' name, amen.